

## WHY SHOULD I SPAY OR NEUTER MY PET?

**The City of Millville** is concerned about the number of homeless animals who are abandoned or surrendered to shelters and wants to bring you this information about protecting your pet's health and preventing the birth of more kittens and puppies.

Annually in the U.S., there are an estimated 6-8 million homeless animals entering animal shelters and more than 2.7 million healthy, adoptable cats and dogs euthanized in shelters. Spaying females and neutering males is the only permanent, 100 percent effective method of birth control for dogs and cats. Besides spaying and neutering being the right thing to do to prevent unwanted puppies and kittens, these procedures also have important health benefits for your pet.

According to a report in *USA Today* (May 7, 2013), neutered and spayed dogs live longer than intact dogs. There is a similar disparity in lifespans among cats. Spayed and neutered pets are less susceptible to certain infections and cannot contract uterine, ovarian or testicular cancer. Another reason for this longer life span is that spaying and neutering reduce your pets drive to roam in search of a mate. Roaming can lead to cats and dogs being lost or injured by vehicles or in fights with other animals. If they wander, they are also more likely to pick up parasites.

Spaying or neutering your dog or cat will reduce some undesirable behaviors. Besides roaming, unaltered dogs and cats, especially males, urine mark their territory. Excessive barking, mounting people and other animals and other dominance establishing behaviors are also greatly reduced among spayed and neutered dogs. Neutering at a young age, before the spraying behavior begins, eliminates this marking in most animals. Spaying and neutering can make your dog, your family and your neighbors safer. Most dog bites and aggressive behavior involve unaltered dogs.

### Misinformation about spaying and neutering:

- Myth: I cannot afford to have my pet spayed or neutered.
- Fact: Many low cost options exist. Call your local animal shelter for information. The reality is that giving good care to just one litter of kittens or puppies before they are adopted can be more than the cost of spaying/neutering. This is especially true if your pet experiences difficulties in the pregnancy or birth. Responsible owners give basic vet care, immunizations and worming medication to their pups and kittens before they are adopted.
- Myth: Females should have one litter before spaying.
- Fact: Every litter adds to the community burden of too many puppies or kittens. Studies have shown that female dogs and cats spayed before their first heat are generally healthier.
- Myth: My dog will be less protective of my home and family.
- Fact: Protecting home and family is instinctive behavior in a dog. How much any particular dog engages in protection has more to do with breeding and training than with hormones.
- Myth: My pet will get fat and lazy.
- Fact: If the owner does not overfeed the animal and gives it enough exercise, this will not happen.
- Myth: It is only one litter and I will find homes for them.
- Fact: You only control that one litter. If a female cat and her offspring breed twice a year they could produce up to 420,000 cats over a seven year period. Only 1 in 12 of those will find a home. In six years, a female dog and her offspring can produce up to 67,000 puppies. A male cat or dog left to roam and breed can sire as many as 2,500 kittens or puppies in a single year. Many people are surprised to learn that nationwide, more than 2.7 million healthy, adoptable cats and dogs are euthanized in shelters annually. These are not 'street animals'. Many of them are the offspring of family pets, even purebreds. Spay/neuter is the only permanent, 100 percent effective method of birth control for dogs and cats.
- Myth: I love my pet so much and want a kitten/puppy just like her/him.
- Fact: Chances are that your pet's offspring will not be just like them in appearance, temperament or behavior. You can never get an exact copy.
- Myth: Animals who are not spayed or neutered are healthier.

- Fact: Unspayed female cats and dogs have a far greater chance of developing pyometra (a fatal uterine infection), [uterine cancer](#), and other cancers of the reproductive system. Medical evidence indicates that females spayed before their first heat are typically healthier. (Many veterinarians now sterilize dogs and cats as young as eight weeks of age.) Male pets that are neutered eliminate their chances of getting testicular cancer, and it is thought that they have lowered rates of [prostate cancer](#) as well.

Consult your vet for advice on the best time to spay or neuter your dog or cat. You will be a responsible pet owner and a good neighbor when you do.

Thanks to the International Fund for Animal Welfare for making this information available.

**Recommended websites:**

[www.americanhumane.org/animals/adoption-pet-care/caring-for-your-pet/spaying-neutering](http://www.americanhumane.org/animals/adoption-pet-care/caring-for-your-pet/spaying-neutering)

[http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/pet\\_overpopulation/facts/why\\_spay\\_neuter.html#.UqO92vRDtvA](http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/pet_overpopulation/facts/why_spay_neuter.html#.UqO92vRDtvA)

(This website has a tool to help you find a low cost spay/neuter facility in your area.)

<http://www.animalhealthfoundation.net/blog/2012/06/how-spaying-and-neutering-benefits-pets-health-and-behavior/>